Detoxification and Withdrawal

717.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Significant percentages of inmates have a history of alcohol and/or drug abuse. Newly incarcerated individuals may enter the facility while under the influence of a substance or they may develop symptoms of alcohol or drug withdrawal. This policy is intended to ensure that the staff is able to recognize the symptoms of intoxication and withdrawal from alcohol or drugs, and that those inmates who are intoxicated or experiencing withdrawal are provided appropriate medical treatment.

This policy also identifies protocols to be used by qualified health care professionals. These protocols are appropriate for inmates who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs or who are experiencing withdrawal from any type of substance abuse.

717.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Alcohol withdrawal - A medical condition characterized by physiological changes that occur when alcohol intake is discontinued in an individual who is addicted to alcohol.

Detoxification - The process by which an individual is gradually withdrawn from drugs by the administration of decreasing doses of the drug on which the person is physiologically dependent, or a drug that is cross-tolerant to the dependent drug, or a drug that medical research has demonstrated to be effective in detoxifying the individual from the dependent drug.

717.2 POLICY

Withdrawal from alcohol or drugs can be a life-threatening medical condition requiring professional medical intervention. It is the policy of this office to provide proper medical care to inmates who suffer from drug or alcohol overdose or withdrawal.

To lessen the risk of a life-threatening medical emergency and to promote the safety and security of all persons in the facility, staff shall respond promptly to medical symptoms presented by inmates.

The contract medical provider shall develop written medical protocols on detoxification symptoms necessitating the immediate transfer of the inmate to a hospital or other medical facility, and procedures to follow if care within the facility should be undertaken.

717.3 STAFF RESPONSIBILITY

Staff should remain alert to signs of drug and alcohol overdose and withdrawal. These symptoms include, but are not limited to, sweating, nausea, abdominal cramps, anxiety, agitation, tremors, hallucinations, rapid breathing and generalized aches and pains. Any staff member who suspects that an inmate may be suffering from overdose or experiencing withdrawal symptoms shall promptly notify the Shift Supervisor, who shall ensure that a qualified health care professional is promptly notified.

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717.4 MEDICAL STAFF RESPONSIBILITY

The qualified health care professional will evaluate the inmate using approved protocols in order to determine the most appropriate care plan, which will be based on the patient's history, current physical status and treatment needs. Any patient who cannot be safely treated in the facility will be referred to an appropriate treatment facility off-site.

717.5 PROCEDURE

Inmates who are observed experiencing severe, life-threatening intoxication (overdose) or withdrawal symptoms will be promptly seen by a contract medical provider or referred to an off-site emergency facility for treatment. Detoxification shall be conducted under medical supervision at the facility or in a hospital or community detoxification center under appropriate security conditions.

If the qualified health care professional determines that an inmate is at risk for progression to a more severe level of withdrawal, the inmate will be appropriately housed in an area where he/she can be kept under constant observation by qualified health care professionals or trained correctional staff.

717.6 WITHDRAWAL AND DETOXIFICATION PROTOCOLS

Protocols are available to qualified health care professionals to guide the care and treatment of individuals who are intoxicated or experiencing drug and/or alcohol withdrawal. These protocols, which have been developed and approved by the contract medical provider, fall within nationally accepted guidelines and are reviewed annually.

When dealing with inmates who are in a custody situation, qualified health care professionals shall utilize detoxification protocols in accordance with local, state, and federal laws.

No direct supervision is required at the time of identifying and initiating care. Overall supervision is provided by the contract medical provider. Qualified health care professionals shall evaluate and provide care to patients utilizing written procedures and/or providers' orders.

717.7 ALCOHOL WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS CHART

The following chart describes typical symptoms of mild, moderate and severe withdrawal. It is to be used as a guide for determining when to refer inmates to a qualified health care professional.

Not all symptoms are always present.

	MILD	**MODERATE**	**SEVERE** (Delirium Tremens)
ANXIETY	Mild restlessness and anxiety	Obvious motor restlessness	Extreme restlessness and agitation with appearance of intense fear is common
APPETITE	Impaired appetite	Marked anorexia	Often rejects all food and fluid except alcohol

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BLOOD PRESSURE	Normal or slightly elevated systolic	Usually elevated systolic	Elevated systolic and diastolic
CONFUSION	Oriented, no confusion	Variable confusion	Marked confusion and disorientation
CONVULSIONS	No	May occur	Severe convulsions are common
HALLUCINATIONS	No hallucinations	Often vague, transient, visual and auditory hallucinations and delusions, often with insight, often occurring only at night	Visual and occasional auditory hallucinations, usually of fearful or threatening content. Misidentification of persons and frightening delusions relating to hallucinatory experiences
MOTOR CONTROL	Inner "shaky"	Visible tremulousness	Gross uncontrollable shaking
NAUSEA	Nausea	Nausea and vomiting	Dry heaves and vomiting
PULSE	Tachycardia	Pulse 100-120	Pulse 120-140
SLEEP	Restless sleep or insomnia	Marked insomnia and nightmares	Total wakefulness
SWEATING	None or slight	Obvious	Extreme

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